ARTICLES

Totalitarian Sect Russian Orthodox Church (MP). Pt.2

"…the government created a completely new, totalitarian-type religious organization, alien to the Orthodox tradition…"

January 10, 2025 · 64 mins read

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We continue researching the issue of how and under what circumstances Orthodox Christianity in Russia, which once inspired millions in their spiritual journey and served as a moral guide for centuries, has been turned into a tool of criminal power with gross features of totalitarian control. We examine the reasons why the ideals of faith and mercy have been subordinated to entities that seek to dominate and ruthlessly suppress any dissent, and why the light of Christ's truth, the foundation of which is love for one's neighbor, eventually faded amid the insane calls of Russian church hierarchs to launch a "holy" war against the Western cultural community.

To be more precise, priests have been commanded to do that, so in order to avoid punishment, the majority of them obediently follow instructions "from above." Blind faith in religious leaders completely overshadows people's critical thinking. Why do they not stop and think about who their leaders are? Who were they before they attained the religious Olympus? Why do people mindlessly and obsequiously obey them?

Distorting the foundations of religious ethics, many forget that the essence of religion is not to support the current government, justify crimes against humanity, or build temples for the armed forces where gilded walls are decorated with frescoes and icons that glorify war. The essence of religion is human self-development and an inner spiritual path leading a person to God and making them better and more merciful.

In a recent publication, "KGB Agents in Cassocks of the Russian Orthodox Church," we mentioned priest Gleb Yakunin who was a member of the commission of deputies of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation that worked with publicly released KGB archives. This man had a difficult life, but his path was his choice. We are only interested in his opinion as a priest and human rights defender and in his insider's view on the question of what the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church is today. Therefore, we decided to publish his literary work "Historical Path of the Orthodox Talibanism" [1]. It contains true history, sharp criticism, and a completely sober look at what is usually kept silent about. In other words, it's an attempt to help readers discern the true face of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that in 1997, Gleb Yakunin as a human rights advocate sued Alexander Dvorkin. The court case Yakunin vs. Dvorkin reflected tensions in the religious

field of post-Soviet Russia, associated with transition to religious pluralism against the background of the Russian Orthodox Church's dominance. The lawsuit was filed in response to allegations by Alexander Dvorkin who called a number of religious organizations "totalitarian sects." The Soviet dissident and defender of freedom of conscience, father Gleb Yakunin, accused Dvorkin of slander. You can read more details about that here: [2]

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe

Volume 22 | Issue 1 Article 1

2-2002

The Yakunin vs. Dvorkin Trial and the Emerging Religious Pluralism in Russia

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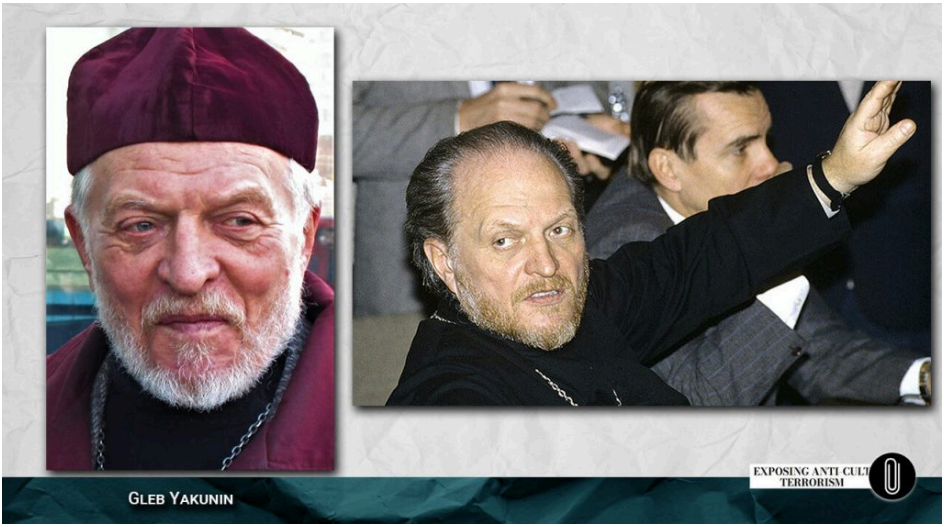

Gleb Yakunin

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In the 1960s and 70s, father Gleb Yakunin was an active participant in the human rights movement. In 1976, he co-founded the Christian Committee for the Protection of the Rights of Believers in the USSR. Before his arrest on November 1, 1979, he published hundreds of materials testifying to massive suppression of religious freedom in the Soviet Union, which had a wide international response.

Gleb Pavlovich Yakunin (1934-2014) was a Soviet and Russian religious, public and political figure, dissident, member of the Moscow Helsinki Group, co-founder of the Christian Committee for the Protection of the Rights of Believers in the

USSR (1976), people's deputy of Russia, member of the Council of Nationalities of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet (1990-1993), and member of State Duma of the first convocation (1993-1995). [3]

In 1965, together with a priest Nikolai Eschliman, he wrote an open letter to Patriarch Alexy I about the Orthodox Church's status in the USSR and betrayal of the church's interests by the Moscow Patriarchate leadership. In May 1966, by the KGB directive, church authorities forbade Gleb Yakunin to continue his priestly ministry until he repented. The ban was issued with active assistance of archbishop Alexy (Ridiger) who was then the Moscow Patriarchate managing director and later became Patriarch Alexy II.

In the 1960s and 70s, father Gleb Yakunin was an active participant in the human rights movement. In 1976, he co-founded the Christian Committee for the Protection of the Rights of Believers in the USSR. Before his arrest on November 1, 1979, he published hundreds of materials testifying to massive suppression of religious freedom in the Soviet Union, which had a wide international response.

On August 28, 1980, he was convicted by the Moscow City Court under article 70, section 1 of the Criminal Code for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, was a prisoner of Lefortovo and the Perm-37 political camp until 1985, and then spent two

and a half years in exile in Yakutia. He was granted amnesty in 1987. The same year, the patriarchate restored him to priestly ministry, and he served as a priest in St. Nicholas Church in the village of Zhigalovo (Shchyolkovo, Moscow region) until 1992.

Yakunin was rehabilitated by decree of the Russian Supreme Council on October 18, 1991. He also headed the Public Committee for the Protection of Freedom of Conscience.

Gleb Yakunin

Before reading the text below, please keep in mind that it was written by the Orthodox priest Gleb Yakunin, and the author's opinion doesn't always correspond to the opinion of our research group. This is an investigation during which the theoretical and evidence base is being collected.

(The work translated from Russian is published with reductions. All the highlights in the text, photos, and links to sources were made by us in order to draw your attention to some key points and expand your understanding by means of additional sources.)

“HISTORICAL PATH OF THE ORTHODOX TALIBANISM”

INTRODUCTION — AS IF NOT INTO LIFE, BUT INTO A NIGHTMARISH DREAM

Today, Russian society needs a spiritual pillar as never before. Naturally, many people’s eyes turn to the thousand-year-old Christian tradition of Russian Orthodoxy in search of the ultimate truth. Several generations of Russians, who were forcibly separated from the faith of their fathers, who had never held the Gospel in their hands and were deprived of basic knowledge in the religious field, reached out to the church’s domain, firmly believing that by stepping under the vault of an ancient temple, they joined the very Church that originated from St. Prince Vladimir who baptized Rus’ in 988, the Church of St. Sergius of Radonezh [4] and St. Seraphim of Sarov [5]. After all, people worship the same icons and pray to God in the same way their ancestors prayed centuries ago. So they certainly have no doubt that Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow

and All Russia, surrounded by Byzantine splendor, is the rightful heir among the hierarchs from the first metropolitans of Kyiv to the holy Patriarch Tikhon.

However, the reality is completely different. In 1927, the legitimate central administration of the Orthodox Church of Russia was interrupted by Bolshevik violence, and the remnants of persecuted Christians fled from extermination and hid in catacombs. In 1943, in place of the original Church, Stalin [6] and Beria formed the Moscow Patriarchate from among representatives of the "temporary synod" of metropolitan bishop Sergius (Stragorodsky) who was recruited by KGB agents. It was the very patriarchate that everyone hears about nowadays. In the conditions of tough war, Stalin started playing the "religious card," in particular in front of the military allies. For that, he instructed L. Beria and state security officer, colonel G. Karpov to "revive" the Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Sergius was proclaimed Patriarch of All Rus' and began to rapidly impose the Moscow Patriarchate in the USSR and abroad. From the perspective of Orthodox Christian canons, blessed entities of the Church's governance could be recreated only according to the canonical rules in force at that time, and only afterwards could they be changed.

Yet, in violation of all canonical norms, in 1943-45, the God-fighting government **created a completely new, totalitarian-**

type religious organization, alien to the Orthodox tradition, with new, previously non-existent church rules, a management structure copying Stalin's Politburo (the "Metropolitan Bureau") and actually fitting the now trendy definition of "totalitarian sect" that has nothing in common with either the Russian or the universal canonical rules of Orthodox Christianity. According to Orthodox Chrisrian canons, believers should regard the establishment and activities of this organization as "those that do not exist," meaning, as invalid. Therefore, the deep need of modern Russia for spiritual authority and a moral foundation runs into the inertia of the Moscow Patriarchate — a subsidiary of the KGB, which has been carrying out its goal for decades: hiding behind religious activities, it zealously serves the anti-religious totalitarian state. As a result of this substitution, today the ROC leadership demonstrates a complete inability to carry out reforms that are so necessary for society, while any attempts to revive the church from below, from the side of communities, ordinary clergy and laity, are suppressed by the patriarchate authorities.

The purpose of this brochure is to help readers who are poorly familiar with the tragic 20th-century history of the Church to discern the true face of the Moscow Patriarchate.

NEVER WAS A STORY OF MORE WOE THAN THIS OF THE PIONEER — TSAR PETER ROMANOV

Since 988, Orthodox Christianity became the state religion in Russia. Along with the baptism by Prince Vladimir, the Byzantine model of the relationship between the state and the Church was adopted — caesaropapism that implied an actual subordination of the Church to the absolute royal, and later imperial, authority. However, at the same time, the Church lived according to its own ancient internal rules: all major religious issues were resolved at councils. Priests and bishops were elected by believers and were then consecrated by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The congregation would proclaim "Axios!" ("Worthy!") three times, knowing the candidate for ordination very well.

In 1721, Emperor Peter I abolished the Church conciliarity and established the Governing Synod subordinate to himself. This unusual ecclesiastical body consisted of several individuals and was endowed with authority greater than that of the Patriarch and the Local Council combined. That was a blatant violation of the Church's canonical foundations! Yet, all archbishops agreed in writing to the Emperor's prepared decree. Notably, the clergy became obliged to report to the police about believers' political disloyalty, even if it was revealed during confession. Moreover, archbishops took an oath of loyalty to the Emperor as the "chairman and ultimate judge of the Governing Synod." Members of the Synod were fully equated with the members of the Senate, receiving the same titles,

privileges, enormous salaries, serfs, gilded carriages, and special medical care. The Emperor returned to them large latifundia where their paradisiacal existence was maintained through the labor of thousands of peasants, despite the monastic vows mandatory for archbishops.

The violent disruption of the Church's conciliarity in the 18th and 19th centuries, primarily the abolition of the election of priests and bishops by believers, as well as the transformation of bishops into appointed government officials and slave owners, and transformation of priests into overseers of slaves, all led to a deep spiritual crisis in Russia. The clergy's detachment from the laity intensified the divide between the elite and the people and eventually resulted in the catastrophe of 1917. The Church was losing authority among people, and the chasm between believers and the clergy, as well as between the ordinary clergy and the episcopate, was growing. Anyone who opposed the government found themselves outside the nationalized and bureaucratized Church. Consequently, the majority of the population ended up outside the Church. As Ivan Aksakov wrote in the 19th century, "In our country, the Church has turned into a semblance of a German bureaucracy, applying… with inevitable falsehood the order of German bureaucracy to the salvation of Christ's flock."

A BRIEF INSTANT OF CONCILIARITY IN FREEDOM — A BREAK IN SISYPHUS' WORK

Only in August 1917, for the first time since 1690, the Local Council of the Orthodox Church of Russia convened. In the context of the Orthodox monarchy downfall, the patriarchate was restored, not in an autocratic, but rather in a conciliar form, because all major issues of church life were once again decided by the will of the believers. Similarly, the ruling archbishops of Petrograd and Moscow were elected. In 1918, the Council adopted the statutes for dioceses and parishes. Candidates for deans and archbishops were proposed by the people, most often on a multi-candidate basis. The transfer of a bishop to another see, or a priest to another church, was considered a special exception to the rules. The patriarch was to be determined apostolically — by casting lots of three candidates. Saint Patriarch Tikhon, who received the fewest votes from the secret ballot of the three candidates at the top of the list, became, by God's will through the lot, the Patriarch of All Russia.

The same Local Council was to address issues regarding canonical and liturgical reform (the Menaion liturgical book had already been translated into Russian), but in the fall of 1918, the Council's work was interrupted by Bolsheviks. Supreme authority in the Church was limited in favor of the conciliar

principle. The Synod retained only coordinating functions. For the first time, executive power was exercised by the newly established High Church Council consisting of bishops, priests, and laypeople on an equal basis and chaired by the Patriarch.

In August 1918, the Local Council determined that it was unacceptable for the clergy to engage in politics on the Church's behalf. Yet, as citizens of the state, archbishops, priests, and laypeople had the right to participate in political activities individually. It was forbidden canonically to discriminate against anyone in the Church due to differences in political views. The Council condemned godless state authorities and prohibited believers from cooperating with them.

ON STAGE, A NEW DANCE: A CHURCH IMPOSTOR TAKES STANCE

The Local Council decided that in the event of the Patriarch's death, a Locum Tenens (Deputy) of the patriarchal throne would be appointed. One of his tasks was to coordinate the Church's activities on convening a canonically free Local Council for the election of a new Patriarch. The Local Council entrusted the Holy Tikhon with the formation of a secret list of candidates for the position of Locum Tenens. In October 1920, the Holy Synod headed by Tikhon detailed this procedure.

After the death of Patriarch Tikhon in 1925, Metropolitan Peter (Poliansky), who was among the four bishops named in the will of the holy Patriarch as canonically authorized candidates, became the Locum Tenens of the patriarchal throne. No one removed the status of Locum Tenens from Metropolitan Peter, while arrests of the hierarch by godless authorities do not constitute an obstacle to bearing the spiritual title. Metropolitan Peter (Poliansky) died a martyr's death (he was shot in 1937) in a Stalin's camp precisely as the legitimate Locum Tenens of the patriarchal throne.

In the conditions of monstrous persecution and repression by the GPU [7], in 1927 Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) took advantage of the arrest of the Locum Tenens — the holy martyr Metropolitan Peter, and contrary to the Church's canons and statutes, declared himself "Deputy Locum Tenens," although he wasn't listed among candidates for the position of legitimate Locum Tenens.

Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky)

The impostor created his own anti-canonical "temporary synod" which was surprisingly quickly recognized by the Soviet authorities and registered by the main persecutor of believers — the GPU… In 1922, Sergius supported a renovationist schism that declared the deposition of the arrested Patriarch Tikhon. Being an experienced schismatic, Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) appropriated administrative power over the Church with GPU's help, which effectively abolished the recently revived conciliarity. Thus, Metropolitan Sergius engaged in the prohibition of service and even excommunication of other bishops, often solely because they refused to swear allegiance to J. Stalin. Only the Council of Bishops and the Local Council have the canonical right to prohibit and excommunicate archbishops. Therefore, through

his so-called temporary synod, Metropolitan Sergius arrogated authority greater than that of the Patriarch and the Local Council combined, while having no such powers from the fullness of the Church. All his powers stemmed solely from his own usurpation and from the decree of registration of his "synod" by the punitive body of the godless regime — Cheka-GPU.

Thus, the canonical succession of the official supreme authority in the Orthodox Church of Russia was interrupted in 1927. According to the 1917-18 Statute, if it wasn't possible to canonically continue the highest church governance, it had to be completely abolished, while bishops had to direct all their efforts to preserve the flock and communities in their regions until there would be an opportunity to convene a legitimate Local Council and determine God's will regarding the Patriarch. However, Metropolitan Sergius violated both the Statute of the Russian Church and the rules of Ecumenical Councils regarding the appointment of bishops. Therefore, according to the norms of the Eastern Church, all acts of Metropolitan Sergius and his synod, starting from the proclaiming himself "Deputy Locum Tenens of the Patriarch," are deeply anti-canonical, that is, represent a church crime. According to the rules of holy councils, for the schism he initiated, Metropolitan Sergius is subject to deposition from the clergy and excommunication from the Church.

NEW JUDAS CALLS THE CHURCH TO A NEW TRYST WITH THE POWER OF ANTICHRIST

In 1927, the new Judas — Metropolitan Sergius — published his famous Declaration where he proclaimed the joys of the socialist state as the joys of the Church. "Your joys are our joys," he wrote to the communist rulers. Since Stalin referred to the second five-year plan as "godless" and believed that by 1937 the word "God" had to disappear from Soviet newspeak, it is clear what "joys" Sergius' hierarchy began to live by. The Declaration contains a "good news" of the hierarchy's apostasy — spiritual solidarity with persecutors of the Church and a union of Orthodox Christianity with the antichrist.

After the Declaration had been published, an official and ultimate schism in the Church became inevitable. More than 60 bishops who didn't share the "joys" of the godless and were therefore sent to the Solovki camps did not recognize the Declaration. Nor was it recognized by the most authoritative metropolitans who had canonical authority from the Local Council to head the Church's central apparatus in the Patriarch's absence and by those who were in exile. Canonically legitimate archpriests blessed believers to disobey the impostor and to retreat into catacombs. In 1930, Metropolitan Sergius told foreign journalists that the Church wasn't persecuted in Russia, while that very year the last

monastery was closed, and the number of martyrs began to be measured in tens and hundreds of thousands!

In 1934, the new Judas blasphemously started calling himself the Locum Tenens while the living and legitimate Locum Tenens, Metropolitan Peter, was suffering for Christ in prison. The devil, as the father of all lies, didn't spare those defectors who supported the former metropolitan either: by 1939, only about a hundred Orthodox Christian parishes and only four bishops subordinate to Metropolitan Sergius legally operated in the USSR. Following the preachers of faith and honest clergymen, many defectors, collaborators, and church informers were repressed, too. Only a handful of Sergius' priests who were the most zealous and loyal to Stalin were left free "as a reserve."

FROM THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL TO THE THIRD ROME

In 1943, J. Stalin decided to use tens of millions of Russians abroad for political purposes, simultaneously attempting to unite countries of the post-Byzantine space (Eastern Europe and the Balkans) under the wing of Moscow as the Third Rome, by playing an ethnic-denominational card.

J. Stalin, Nicholas (Yarushevich), Alexy (Simansky) and Sergius (Stragorodsky)

Stalin summoned three surviving activists from Sergius' schismatic group to the Kremlin: Metropolitans Sergius (Stragorodsky), Alexy (Simansky), and Nicholas (Yarushevich). He allocated a government airplane and ordered them to gather the remaining loyal bishops from concentration camps to elect a new "patriarch." Several dubious ordinations were urgently conducted, and ultimately, 19 individuals declared themselves an Orthodox Christian council at which they disregarded all fundamental canons of universal and Russian Orthodoxy and proclaimed Sergius Stragorodsky the "Patriarch of All Rus'." Moreover, Stalin and Beria renamed the newly formed religious organization — Moscow Patriarchate — as the "Russian Orthodox Church" instead of the traditional "Orthodox Church of Russia," emphasizing its nationalist

character and designating its role in the fight against so-called "cosmopolitanism." Thus, since 1927, the Orthodox Christian Church founded in Rus' in 988 existed only in catacombs and in exile abroad.

Sergius (Stragorodsky), Alexis (Simansky) and Nicholai (Yarushevich)

In February 1945, Stalin decided to give the newly established religious organization, his pocket "red sect," an all-Union scale and international authority. At government expense, he organized the so-called "Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church" in Moscow. The procedure for convening and conducting this "council" had nothing to do with the valid and unrevoked canonical charter of Russian Orthodoxy: the organizers violated both the requirements of the existing charter and the canons of Ecumenical Councils. Stalin bribed

foreign guests who arrived at the so-called council, primarily representatives of Eastern Orthodox Churches, with generous gifts: cash dollar rewards, sacred vestments, and decorations made of gold and precious stones, which had been confiscated from museums and earlier looted by Bolsheviks from the historical Orthodox Church of Russia.

ROC Local Council in 1945 [24]

ROC Local Council in 1945 [24]

This is strikingly evidenced, for example, by a letter from Patriarch Alexy I to the Chairman of the Council for ROC Affairs, lieutenant general G. Karpov, dated Nov. 20, 1947: "*Alongside the ideological inclination towards Moscow, the Antiochian Patriarchate hopes that the Russian Church and especially the Russian Government will renew the long-standing tradition of systematic financial assistance to the impoverished Antiochian Church: for schools, churches, individual particularly needy hierarchs, etc. It was the state itself, and not through the Church, that widely subsidized the Antiochian Church before the revolution, based on the government's considerations of the necessity to support Orthodox Christianity in the East. ...Metropolitan Ilya volunteered to be our officialized (not official) intermediary between us and the Greek Patriarchs; and in his opinion, the decisive factor is the extent of our ability to offer them money...*"

Under the influence of precious gifts, consumed caviar, and drunk Caucasian wines and cognacs that to the members of the "council" seemed to be manna from heaven amidst the 1945 hunger and devastation, the "Temporary Regulation on Administration of the Russian Orthodox Church" was adopted, which completely contradicted the canons of the Orthodox

Christian Church. This regulation has turned the Moscow Patriarchate into an entity resembling a totalitarian sect, where three individuals led by the so-called Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus' gained power greater than that of the Local Council and the right to administratively rule the Church in an even more dictatorial manner than Peter's Synod had been ruled. Yet, while emperors before 1917 had still been considered Orthodox Christians, from now on the Church's official bodies were completely subordinated to the will of the chiefs of the godless regime. Church history has never known such a fall throughout the 2,000 years of Christianity!

At the "council" of 1945, Metropolitan Alexy (Simansky), a close associate of Sergius (Stragorodsky), was elected the "Patriarch of all Rus'" through an uncanonical open vote. He was the one who discredited himself through active collaboration with GPU and participation in the renovationist schism in 1922-23.

Metropolitan Alexis I (Simansky)

For his faithful and prolonged service to the Soviet government and state security agencies, Alexy Simansky continuously received his "thirty pieces of silver": government ZIS cars, a dacha, vacations in Crimea, cruises on comfortable steamers, a special train car for his railway travels, special meals and healthcare services. **Until the very collapse of the USSR, the Moscow Patriarchate was supplied with delicacies and alcoholic beverages from the Kremlin warehouses.** All leaders of the church hierarchy in Stalin's and Brezhnev's times were awarded with orders, medals, and honorary certificates for their merits and contribution to the construction of communism, and the USSR KGB [8] was among those who granted the awards. Patriarch Alexy I became a record holder among Soviet hierarchs by the number of awarded orders: his

four Orders of the Red Banner of Labor are still carefully preserved and proudly displayed in the museum of the Spiritual Academy in Sergiev Posad. Truly, it's a sect of "star-bearing fathers"!

As the disclosure of KGB archives has shown, under the guise of its liturgical and religious activities, the "red" Patriarchate was actually a subdivision of the MGB (USSR Ministry of State Security) [9]. That is why, after the umbilical cord connecting the Moscow Patriarchate with its mother organization — the 4th Department of KGB's Fifth Directorate — was severed in 1991, the ROC found itself incapable of independent church service. The words of Christ about an unfaithful servant were once again proved: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other."

In 1947-48, the Stalinist Orthodox Church hoped to convene an All-Orthodox Council where, with the help of the invisibly present MGB, the Moscow Patriarch would be promoted from his current fifth place in the hierarchy of Patriarchs to the first place, i.e. he would become Ecumenical. Then Moscow would again be proclaimed the Third Rome [10] while Joseph Stalin would be the new Constantine the Great. However, God didn't allow such blasphemy against Christianity.

FATHER OF THE HOMELAND PATRIARCHATE IS PLEASED: CHILDREN AREN'T BAD INDEED

Even in the status of the Bolshevik leader, Stalin's Patriarchate glorified its godfather more than all saints. Herei s how Patriarch Alexy I and Metropolitan Nikolai described their impressions after meeting with Joseph Stalin on April 10, 1945:

"Filled with happiness to see face to face the one whose name is spoken with love not only in every corner of our country, but also in all freedom-loving and peace-loving countries, we expressed our gratitude to Joseph Vissarionovich... The conversation was an absolutely relaxed exchange between a father and his children." A father and his children! What could be more telling than this blatant self-exposure by the Patriarchate?

In 1947, on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of Moscow, Patriarch Alexy I declared that the religious organization he led was engaged in *"diligent all-church, all-Russian prayer for the state, victory, peace, health, and salvation... of all the valiant leaders of our country, headed by our Great wise Leader who firmly guides our Motherland along the ancient sacred path of power, greatness, and glory."*

The death of ROC founder, Generalissimo J. Stalin, in 1953 was a heavy blow to his spiritual children — Patriarch Alexy I (Simansky) and his aides, plunging them into deep sorrow. From their "theological" standpoint, it seemed humiliating to refer to their deity as "God's servant Joseph" (which was the standard wording in church memorials). Therefore, at the memorial service, the deceased leader was mentioned as "Generalissimo Joseph." In his address before the burial prayer, Patriarch Alexy I proclaimed: "*The great Leader of our people, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, has passed away. The great social power discontinued:*

the power in which our people felt their own strength, which guided them in their creative labors and endeavors, which comforted them for many years. There is no corner that the deep gaze of our great Leader didn't reach... Not a single issue brought before him was dismissed; he fulfilled all our requests. The memory of him will live in us forever..."

Even during the Khrushchev era, when the Communist Party of the Soviet Union "repented" of the "cult of personality" at the 20th and 22nd congresses, Soviet hierarchs remained loyal to the indelible memory of their Father — the "Great Leader." The "cult servants" remain devoted to the "cult" of their spiritual Father and Founder to this day. On behalf of the Moscow Patriarchate, not a single word of repentance has been uttered for those extremely disgraceful pages of the past.

KHRUSHCHEV WHO LAUNCHED SATELLITES BECAME A JULIAN THE APOSTATE

Upon coming to power, the first reformer Nikita Khrushchev [11] decided to put the Orthodox servants of Stalin's cult in their place. In retaliation for the veneration of Stalin, he proposed that they themselves initiate a new wave of mass closures of parishes, spiritual seminaries, and monasteries. Honored Soviet bishops themselves began to hastily prove the uselessness of religion for socialist society, rushing to shut down parishes. The archbishops most successful in this endeavor were awarded and promoted. From 1958 to 1964, the number of parishes was reduced by more than half! The Archbishop of Kaluga, Hermogenes (Golubev), who opposed this, was unlawfully stripped of his see and confined in a monastery under prison conditions.

The Sergianist hierarchy, which had merged with the KGB, was fundamentally incapable of caring for the interests of believers. In 1961, Patriarch Alexy I and the future Patriarch Pimen completely removed all clergy from influencing the Church's economic and administrative life. Parish priests were reduced to hired employees of the "groups of twenty" — founders of parishes formed by Soviet executive committees, who were in fact not believers, but often veterans of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and KGB. As a result, under government orders, the so-called "group of twenty" could close a church at any moment or terminate a contract with a politically disloyal priest, effectively rendering him unemployed. During the 1960s, they were dismissed from pastoral ministry even for giving references to young believers who applied to officially functioning Theological Seminary. Meanwhile, in 1961, Archbishop Pimen (Izvekov), one of the primary enforcers of the atheist regime within the Church, was rewarded by the socialist state with the title of Metropolitan, the Order of the Red Banner of Labor, and the second most significant see — the Leningrad diocese. Later, he was elevated to the position of Patriarch.

CRITICALLY IMPORTANT ARCHIVES — THE PATRIARCHATE'S GUTS

Under Nikita Khrushchev, the process of recruiting clergy as secret agents for the KGB extended to lower ranks of the Church hierarchy. Not only bishops but also a significant portion of the ordinary clergy, as well as lay church workers — members of the "groups of twenty," altar men, choir members, guards, and cleaners — were filtered through the recruitment sieve of the special services.

As early as 1922, the Cheka (predecessor of KGB) developed a classified manual on how to recruit Orthodox clergy through a carrot and stick approach to make them "eternal slaves of the Cheka":

"Report of the assistant to the authorized representative of the secret department of the VChK* (Cheka) on secret intelligence work among the clergy for the year 1921.

1. Use the clergy for our purposes, especially those holding important positions in the Church, such as archbishops, metropolitans, etc., forcing them under the threat of severe consequences to issue certain orders to other clergy that may be useful to us. For instance, cessation of prohibited agitation against decrees, closure of monasteries, etc.
2. Identify the character of individual bishops and vicars in order to exploit their ambitions by encouraging their desires and plans.

3. Recruit informants among the clergy after getting acquainted with a priest's inner world and determining the detailed character traits of every clergyman individually. Information can be obtained in various ways, primarily through seizure of correspondence during searches and through personal acquaintance within ecclesiastical circles.

Financial incentives for informants among the clergy are necessary. Monetary and in-kind subsidies will undoubtedly bind them to us in other aspects as well, particularly through fear of exposure, thus making them eternal slaves of the Cheka*. However, this method is quite unreliable and may only be useful when a recruitment target is weak-willed and spineless."

In the 1950s and 60s, this chekist directive began to be fully implemented. This was hardly surprising as the entire church top hierarchy had been created with the hands of the Cheka masters. This process gained particular momentum after the ROC joined the World Council of Churches [12], the Christian Peace Conference, and other international organizations. **The recruitment of ROC clergy reached such a scale that it became difficult to distinguish where they were addressing religious matters and where intelligence or Communist Party affairs.** The scale of the merging of church and intelligence positions, as well as the tasks assigned to the ROC and the USSR KGB,

can be inferred at least from the following reports stored in the KGB's Central Archive.

In July 1983, "47 (!) KGB agents from among religious authorities, clergy, and technical staff were sent to Vancouver, Canada, as part of the USSR religious delegation (which included 120 people) at the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches" (according to the USSR KGB Central Archive). In July 1984, reports from the 4th department of KGB's Fifth Directorate stated: "Agents with a mission to promote a candidate acceptable to us for the position of General Secretary of the World Council of Churches traveled to Switzerland as part of the ROC delegation to the WCC Central Committee. Emilio Castro was elected to this position, with support not only from the ROC, but also from the churches of socialist countries."

In 1983, an open letter from Patriarch Pimen to the U.S. President Ronald Reagan was published, condemning U.S. policies and defending those of the USSR. KGB archives contain information on how this letter was actually prepared: "Through agents 'Ostrovsky' and 'Kuznetsov,' an open letter from Patriarch Pimen to U.S. President Reagan was written. The letter was published in the New York Times, reprinted in Izvestia, and sent to allies for publication in their newspapers."

According to the official Parliamentary Commission of the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet, the main centers of USSR KGB's activities under the Church's "cover" were the Christian Peace Conference, which was headed for many years by the current Patriarch Alexy II (Ridiger), and the Department for External Church Relations (DECR) of the Moscow Patriarchate. A KGB agent codenamed "Aramis," who worked as a translator in the DECR, later decided to confess and revealed in the newspaper "Argumenty i Fakty" ("Arguments and Facts," Issue 8, 1992) that almost all DECR employees were affiliated with either the Moscow KGB department or the USSR KGB headquarters.

Reports were mandatory "about the time and places visited by foreigners. The reports were submitted in five copies: one for the DECR Chairman (Metropolitan Nikodim, later Metropolitan Juvenaly, etc.), one for the Council for Religious Affairs, which was essentially a KGB subsidiary, and the remaining copies directly for the KGB." As early as in 1969, the founding father of DECR, Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) of Leningrad, provided a special theological justification for the practice of submitting the aforementioned reports in five copies, echoing the ideas of Sergius Stragorodsky. He saw the result of fifty years of building socialism in the fact that "in this new world, the ideals brought into the world by the Incarnate Word are embodied and receive real existence."

Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov)

The goals and tasks of high-ranking agents weren't limited to snitching and perjury. For instance, in October 1969, the Moscow Patriarchate's delegation at the Christian Peace Conference was tasked with "discrediting Ondra (a citizen of Czechoslovakia who made anti-Soviet statements during the events of 1968 in that country) in his position as CPC General Secretary and ensuring his removal from this post." The task was accomplished, so each of the "fathers from the Star country" likely received yet another starry medal or honorary certificate.

There were also assignments of a political and strategic nature: "As part of a joint plan with Service 'A' of the USSR KGB's First Chief Directorate, favorable influence on Western clerical

circles was exerted by the KGB's leading agents through religious channels; a complex of actions was carried out to impact the socio-political crisis in Western European countries" (1981). However, such a complicated mission turned out to be "a cross too heavy" for the Moscow Patriarchate: the "complex of actions" performed by the leading agents in cassocks led to an opposite result: it wasn't the Western European countries that found themselves in a hopeless crisis, but the Soviet Union itself.

At the same time, the USSR KGB bodies were exceptionally concerned with prioritizing the interests of their goddaughter, the Moscow Patriarchate: "Agents have been sent for study in theological educational institutions of the USSR, Socialist Yugoslavia, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the People's Republic of Bulgaria, and the Polish People's Republic… They were assigned to inform the clergy in those countries about the hegemonic aspirations of the Patriarch of Constantinople against the interests of the Orthodox Churches, and to establish contacts with the clergy and identify the enemy's intentions" (December 1988!). From the above excerpt created during the fourth year of perestroika, six months after the official celebrations in honor of the Millennium of Baptism of Rus', **it is already very hard to understand where KGB's interests end and the Patriarchate's interests begin** — it is obviously impossible to separate the two.

Photo of the CC CPSU General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev [13] with church hierarchs

Here's another recent episode from the state-security life of the Moscow Patriarchate. In 2000, scandalous information emerged about the arrest and subsequent trial of an exposed KGB agent, retired U.S. Army Colonel George Trofimoff who had been recruited by his spiritual father, ROC Metropolitan Irenaeus Susemihl (agent codename "Icarus"). Metropolitan Irenaeus held the position of Bishop of Vienna and Austria.

Espionage materials provided by Trofimoff were valued at only 60,000 [German] marks, but he received a high state honor — the Order of the Red Banner of Combat. However, Metropolitan "Icarus" Irenaeus wasn't awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor, unlike many of his episcopal

colleagues. For example, Patriarch Alexy I was awarded a whole four times.

Metropolitan Irenaeus' vestments never spread their wings during high spiritual endeavors, and unlike his namesake, the ancient Greek hero Icarus, he did not perish in a laborious feat, but peacefully passed away (was it in the Lord?) without waiting a couple of years for the trial of his unfortunate "spiritual child" in the US. Perhaps, KGB archives keep a burning secret for instructive purposes: how the archpastor Susemihl managed to recruit a lamb from his flock. It is possible that the lamb himself — now inmate Trofimoff — might reveal this state secret in his prison memoirs. A simple curiosity lingers: How did the spiritual father blackmail him upon recruitment? Did he threaten to break the seal of confession or to refuse to absolve George's sins? The reaction of ROC leadership to this scandal was standard — a wall of silence.

GREAT HELPERS OF KGB DIVISION IN BATTLE AGAINST RELIGION

Priests who did not wish to cooperate with the secret police, but also didn't engage in politics at all, were repressed solely for wanting to fulfill their pastoral duties conscientiously. A particularly illustrative example is that of Father Alexander

Men who was oppressed for many years by his church superiors. And there are many similar cases. When priests and laypeople were punished for “excessive” religious activity, the Moscow Patriarchate not only didn’t intercede for them with the authorities it was aligned with, but also distanced itself from them, publicly denying the facts of persecution for faith, which further loosened the hands of the repressive organs in suppressing religion. A particularly significant assessment of ROC bishops was provided by the Council for Religious Affairs under the USSR Council of Ministers as a report to the CPSU Central Committee in 1978.

The most favorable bishops for the communists are those “who, both in words and deeds, confirm not only loyalty, but also patriotism to the socialist society; who genuinely realize that our state isn’t interested in elevating the role of religion and the church in society and, understanding this, do not show particular activity in expanding the influence of Orthodoxy among the population.” Among them are: Patriarch Pimen, Metropolitan Alexy of Tallinn, Metropolitan of Tula, Metropolitan Nicodemus of Kharkiv… It is not surprising that the illegal arrest, deprivation of citizenship, and expulsion from the country of the Russian writer A.I. Solzhenitsyn in 1974 was described by Metropolitan Alexy (Ridiger) as a very “humane” action by the Soviet government! No surprise that it was Alexy who succeeded Pimen as Patriarch of “all Rus’.”

Alexy II (Ridiger)

In the same year of 1974, Alexy (Ridiger), who also headed ROC's educational committee, on his own initiative received approval from the Council for Religious Affairs to introduce new "theological" disciplines in the seminaries under his jurisdiction: "Educating the flock in the spirit of love for the Motherland, Soviet patriotism, and a fair, conscientious attitude towards labor for the good of the Fatherland is the task of an Orthodox priest;" "What the Soviet Motherland and a Soviet citizen is?"

Even more telling were the titles of lectures delivered in spiritual seminaries by Alexy Ridiger who was aspiring to become a Patriarch:

- "V.I. Lenin and the Cultural Revolution;"

- “Communist Morality Regarding Labor and Socialist Property;”
- “Education of a New Human as a Fundamental Task of Building Communism.”

In 1975, the Council for Religious Affairs under the USSR Council of Ministers sincerely “rejoiced” that, thanks to the efforts of the current Patriarch Alexy, there appeared “an opportunity to influence future clergy in the direction that serves our interests and to expand their theoretical and practical knowledge in a materialistic spirit. This will undermine the religious and mystical ideals of future priests; this may lead… to an understanding of their own uselessness as a cult servant.” For such efforts, just an Order of the Red Banner of Labor is clearly not enough! This effort is almost worthy of the badge of Honorary Worker of the Cheka or a KGB Honor Certificate (which was indeed awarded in 1988 to this outstanding hierarch with the agent codename “Drozdov” for particularly active involvement in intelligence operations).

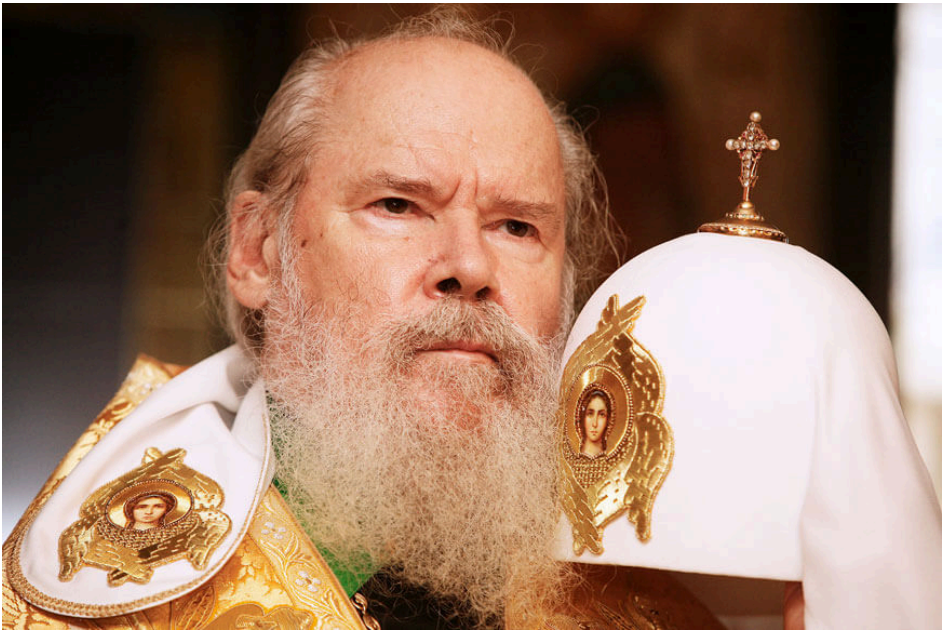
The current leader of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church within the Stalinist Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan), was not far behind his senior comrade. At a reception given by the Council for Religious Affairs under the USSR Council of Ministers on December 23, 1974, Volodymyr Sabodan, then rector of the Moscow Theological Academy and Seminary, stated: “You know that among our students there

are still quite a few young men with negative views on earthly life, raised by fanatical grandmothers and parents. These views must be broken. We are concerned that among part-time students — present-day clergy — there are still quite a lot of people with outdated and even hostile views, which they skillfully conceal, revealing them only in our circle."

Those priests who, contrary to their superiors, did not come to understand their own uselessness and dared to express not a materialistic but a religious faith were "pressured" by the Patriarch and metropolitans by being sent to remote rural parishes or even forcibly removed from their positions without the right to serve and preach. Those who dared to openly profess faith in God in a wider circle became targets of punitive agencies, were summoned for "conditioning," interrogated, and sent to prisons and labor camps. Even their relatives were subjected to intimidation. Thus, in the case of the layman believer Alexander Ogorodnikov, the KGB instigated… a divorce! The Moscow Patriarchate always renounced believers disloyal to communist materialism, condemning them to prolonged persecution.

HOW MP'S MIRACLE WORKERS — SAINTLY THUGS CAN QUICKLY RIP OFF THEIR OWN BRETHREN

In 1988, after the CPSU General Secretary M. Gorbachev ordered the members of the "Metropolitan Bureau" to engage in "moral revival" of ordinary members of the socialist camp, the ideologists in mitres had to urgently "reform." In 1990, at the ROC Local Council, Alexy Ridiger [14] was elected the Patriarch of "All Rus'" through a secret ballot, thereby violating the canonical order established at the 1917-1918 Local Council once again. Members of the 1990 council were afraid to entrust this fateful matter for Russia to God, *"For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."* (1 Samuel 16:7). Therefore, the episcopate chose a leader for themselves from two "fighters against backward and antagonistic views" (i.e. fighters against religion): Metropolitan Alexy (Ridiger) and Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan) who both had raised more than one generation of Soviet shepherds in the spirit of Leninist ethics and socialist attitudes towards property. Metropolitan Alexy who owned more orders, honorary signs and certificates clearly won.

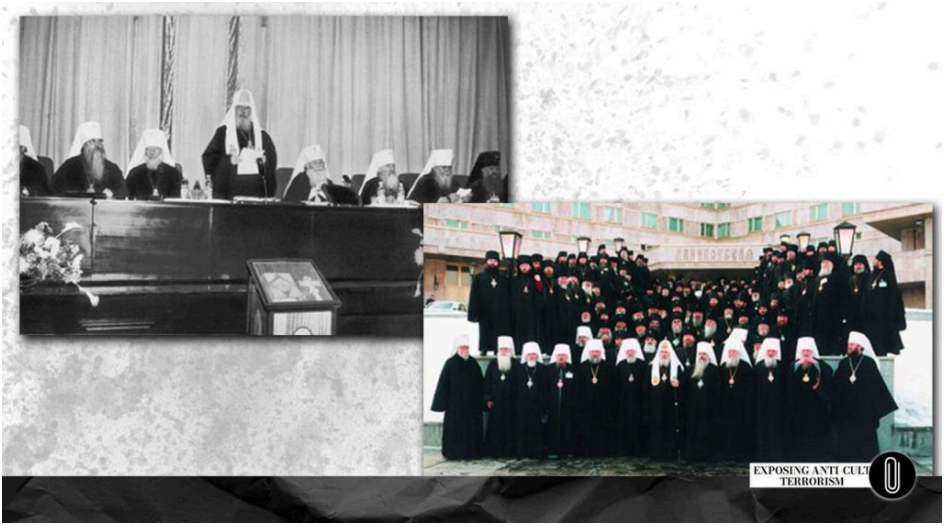


Alexy Ridiger

In October 1990, an all-USSR law and a Russian republican law on freedom of religion were adopted, granting the Church the status of a legal entity and unlimited freedom for religious, educational, publishing, and economic activities. How did the Moscow Patriarchate use this freedom? The issue of the Church's official social doctrine and its preaching in society (missionary activity) only interested the Moscow Patriarchate for four years (!) after it gained legislative rights. Almost all opportunities for that, arising due to close contacts with the country's leadership, were not put into practice between 1991 and 1994. Instead, MP only focused on obtaining various material benefits, as well as on mass reopening of destroyed

churches and monasteries, even if there were virtually no believers and no funds for restoration, just to ensure they did not fall into the hands of the true heirs of the Orthodox Russian Church — the catacomb church fanatically persecuted by the KGB, and the Synodal Overseas Church — the "White Church."

Over the four and a half years of complete, even uncontrolled freedom, the Moscow Patriarchate focused all its efforts on improving the living conditions of the Church's administrative elite, as well as engaging in massive lobbying for various benefits for various commercial and semi-commercial entities that shared part of their "shadow" profits with church officials. The Moscow Patriarchate, synodal departments, and Synod members have acted as co-founders, board members, or shareholders of dubious banks and enterprises for the sale of precious metals, oil, and other commodities, while contributing not a penny of investment or making only a purely nominal contribution. Tax benefits for religious organizations, lobbied private benefits, and special licenses for the export of oil and other raw materials — that's the Moscow Patriarchate's share in the shadow business. However, when it comes to financing spiritual education, enlightenment, charity, social services, and relevant TV programs, the profits obtained from this share mysteriously disappear. The Patriarchate has no money for that.



Archbishop Council in February 1997

In February 1997, the Archbishop Council announced that the Patriarchate's 1993-94 annual budget had been about 1 million US dollars, while in 1995-96 it had been 2 million US dollars each year. However, according to official data, the Department for External Church Relations received 75 million US dollars in 1995 and 23 million US dollars in 1996 from the poisoning of the Russian population with cheap duty-free imported tobacco. The Nikolo-Ugreshsky Monastery (which is directly subordinate to the Patriarch) derived 350-million-dollar profit solely from accustoming the population to the "demon in the bottle" through selling alcohol. The fact of trading such "humanitarian aid" and the transfer of money to "tobacco metropolitans" and "vodka monks" has been officially confirmed by the prosecutor's office in response to my inquiry.

Tobacco accounted for 42% of the so-called “humanitarian aid” that was shamelessly sold.

After the benefits for various swindlers had been abolished on July 18, 1996, on September 12 the same year the Russian Government issued an order No. VCh-P2-3/1286, “resurrecting” those benefits for businessmen from the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1994-95, the Russian Joint Stock Company ‘International Economic Cooperation,” where the Patriarchate is the main founder, exported 14.7 million tons of oil (with a turnover of 2 billion US dollars in 1996 alone). Information on other enterprises trading in oil, diamonds and gold, where the Patriarchate is engaged, hasn’t been disclosed yet. Diamond stars of the Church — “Adamant”’s agents — do not disdain diamond business either. For instance, in 1994, the ARTGEMMA CJSC controlled by the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations received diamonds for processing and sale from Rosdragmet, worth 6 million US dollars.

While discussing ROC’s shadow activities, the weekly paper Moscow News (No. 25 from 2000) wrote: *“...the higher the political role of the church and its head in recent years... the more actively the church is embedding itself in the economy...”* In the CIS countries, the church has turned into a gigantic offshore entity with uncontrolled cash flows. Paradoxically,

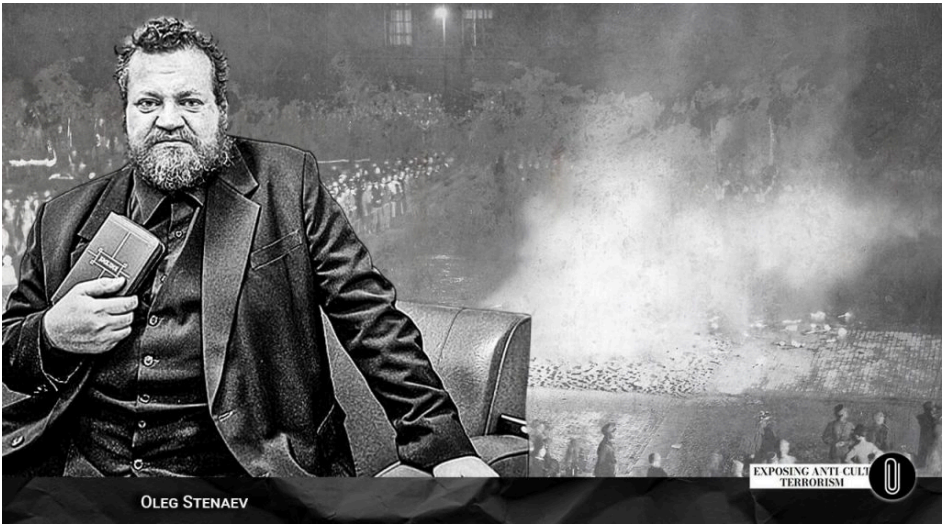
ROC's wealth does not directly depend on the number of parishioners or the number of parishes (due to the immeasurable size of the church's shadow income).

Everything new that tries to break through the concrete slab of the church hierarchy operating from Stalin's and Brezhnev's times faces persecution. As soon as priests Alexander Borisov and Georgy Kochetkov managed to draw several thousand people, mostly youth, to God, by the Patriarch's decree Father Georgy was transferred to a small church where his congregation cannot fit in physically. Meanwhile, the Patriarchate encourages various church-related extremists, anti-Semites and people inclined to deny freedom of choice and resort to violence in matters of faith. Since the Patriarchate and its ministers have nothing positive to say to contemporary society, their entire "preaching" boils down to calls to "forbid," "excommunicate" and "curse," and increasingly, state violence is invoked to assist.

In 1994-95, the Moscow Patriarchate entered into half-secret agreements with all law-enforcement agencies: Russia's Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Internal Affairs, border troops, and even FAPSI (Federal Agency for Government Communications and Information). Why is a contract needed with such an exotic organization as FAPSI? After all, the Patriarch already has access to immediate communication

with the President, as well as helicopters (ATS-1 and ATS-2). Perhaps, the entire episcopate wishes to enjoy the benefits of privileged telephone lines, and at the same time, eavesdrop on the conversations of their spiritual brothers. There is no need to conclude an agreement with the FSB since all KGB agents from the USSR who served as "hierarchs" in the Patriarchate either remained in the same church positions or even advanced higher… Thus, the "eternal slaves" increasingly claim external dominance over ordinary Russians. KGB agents with panagias on their chests envision the clergy as thoughtless ritualists, "Orthodox shamans" who promote all sorts of superstitions and magic rites, appropriate to 19th-century villagers.

On May 5, 1995, at the Church of the Icon of the Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow" in the center of Moscow, priest Oleg Steniayev and the dean, Father Boris Guznyakov, performed a medieval rite of "exorcising spirits," followed by a courtyard "purification by fire" ceremony known from the activities of the Catholic Inquisition. Oleg Steniayev burned non-Orthodox literature in the bonfire, and the entire country watched that on the RTR channel's "Vesti."



Anticultist Oleg Stenaev

Meanwhile, anti-Semitism and the ideology of the Black Hundreds (extreme chauvinism) thrive as exemplified by Metropolitan John of St. Petersburg, the permanent member of the Holy Synod who called for ethnic cleansing within government institutions, similar to that in Germany in 1933.

On July 12, 1995, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew wrote to Patriarch Alexy II: *"...throughout the entire seventy years of Soviet tyranny the Mother Church of Constantinople, while painfully observing the uncanonical defiances [sic] or incidents going on here and there, had the impression that such actions were dictated or even imposed by the hegemonic tactics of the atheistic regime. Thus, we co-suffered with you and judged with leniency."* But today, in a renewing Russia, to quote the

same letter from Patriarch Bartholomew, *"when the winds of freedom in Christ blow again for all," "prolonged and imposed coexistence with this regime hinders"* the Russian Orthodox Church from restoring its canonical conciliar structure and being a true Church capable of serving as a moral support for people.

WHO ENLIGHTENS US SPIRITUALLY? NONE OTHER THAN THE GLORIOUS ORTHODOX TALIBAN

As in Orthodox Christianity globally, so in Russia in particular, extreme parties have vividly manifested themselves: "liberal democrats" on one side, and their fierce opponents — conservative radical extremists ideologically led by Metropolitan John (Snychov) of St. Petersburg — on the other. Although the Metropolitan died in 1995, his legacy is thriving and winning over, having in its ranks the majority of Synod members: the ruling bishops, parish priests, and most of the monks. Meanwhile, the few reformers in the Moscow Patriarchate are persecuted. Priest A. Men was murdered; his books were *de facto* banned from sale in churches, church shops and stalls, except for two or three Moscow churches. The persecutions against Father Georgy Kochetkov and his numerous congregation who attempted to implement minimal yet highly pressing reforms in their parish life, such as conducting services in Russian, are widely known. The only

information outlet that can be nominally classified as "moderately liberal" — the Christian Church Society Channel on Radio Sophia — received a stern warning from Patriarch Alexy II in 1997: *"We believe that participation of ROC clergymen in the programs on Radio Sophia is unacceptable as it contradicts the spirit of the Orthodox faith."*

At the same time, the powerful wing of fundamentalist fanatics who represent the ruling overwhelming majority in the Russian Orthodox Church controls numerous media outlets that promote its fanatic ideology: the radio station and newspaper "Radonezh;" Metropolitan Kirill's Saturday religious program on ORT; the newspapers "Rus' Pravoslavnaya" ("Orthodox Rus'") and "Rus' Derzhavnaya" ("Sovereign Rus'"); the TV program and magazine "Russian House;" special inserts in the communist newspaper "Zavtra" ("Tomorrow"), and the most marginal and low-circulation newspapers: "I Am Russian," "We Are Russians," "Our Fatherland," "Pulse of Tushino," "Duel," and others. More moderate newspapers, which still often contain attacks against non-Orthodox and liberals, are "Orthodox Moscow" and "Moscow Church Herald." As for the provincial press, local branches of "Taliban" are countless!

Let's list the main principles of the "Credo" of the Moscow Patriarchate Orthodox "Taliban":

1. Retrospective worldview: backward focus and sacralization of the past. True verity is found only in ancient piety.
2. Belief in the inviolability and truthfulness of the Old Style (Julian calendar). Fundamentalists adhere to the Old Style out of principle.
3. Unacceptability of church service in modern languages: for Russians, service in Russian is unacceptable.
4. Prohibition of statutory changes in church service.
5. Adherence to the idea of the 15th-century elder Philotheus of Pskov: "Moscow is the Third Rome." Hence:
6. Political and religious thirst for the restoration of monarchy, empire, and church-state symphony in Russia, which supposedly existed before 1917.
7. Militant anti-ecumenism and a demand for ROC's withdrawal from the World Council of Churches (following the Bulgarian and Georgian Churches).
8. Extreme hostility towards non-Orthodox: Catholics, Protestants, and other denominations up to destructive sects.
9. Hostility towards the West, its political and social order, Western culture, and especially towards the USA and NATO.
10. **Rejection of democracy, democratic freedoms, human rights, and particularly freedom of conscience.** At the ROC Archbishop Council in August 2000, a concept of extreme rejection of the right to freedom of conscience was adopted: "The affirmation of the legal principle of freedom of conscience indicates the loss of religious goals and

values by society to mass apostasy and actual indifference to the cause of the church and the triumph over sin."

11. Anti-Semitism: a belief that Jews are to blame for all of Russia's misfortunes. The spiritual teacher of Orthodox "Talibanism," Metropolitan John (Snychov), instigator of persecution against supporters of church reforms, was an inveterate anti-Semite and believed in the authenticity of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and a global conspiracy against Russia and Orthodox Christianity — the stronghold of the true fight against the antichrist and satan. In the March 14, 1995 edition of "Soviet Russia," Metropolitan John's favorite newspaper, this proponent of anti-Semitism articulated his theological views on the national question: *"Russian people now perceive a Jew as both a judge and an executioner. A Russian person insists: 'The filthy Jews have destroyed Russia…"*

He considered the liberal-reformist trend in the Russian Orthodox Church godless: *"Having realized the impossibility of destroying the Church through direct violence, the godless make a bet on its disintegration from within through an imperceptible 'inoculation' of the apostolic patristic teachings of Orthodoxy with heretical views and speculations."*

By the late 1990s, the aforementioned doctrinal "truths" increasingly began to be shared by the church leadership headed by Patriarch Alexy II and Metropolitan Kirill

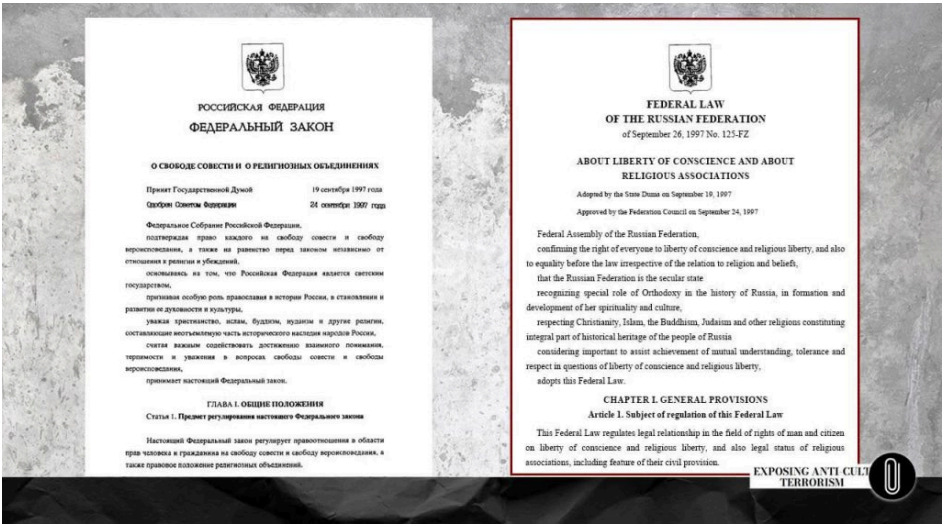
(Gundyaev), transitioning to extremist conservative and ultranationalist views.

WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR CHOKE ON IT, CLERICALIZATION WITHOUT SANITATION OF ALL RUSSIA IS GONNA BE

Since the grand anniversary of the Millennium of Baptism of Rus', pompously celebrated in 1998, the Moscow Patriarchate has been tirelessly declaring to the world an unprecedented religious revival in Russia. However, in reality, what is occurring is not the revival of faith among the people, but a substitution: a constantly increasing clericalization of the state and society, actively supported by the state bureaucratic apparatus, which amplifies the role of "servants of the cult," particularly the higher hierarchical echelon in the social and political life of the state and society.

As one contemporary theologian aptly stated, "Clericalization is a phenomenon in which the priestly elite acts as an intermediary between society and the heavens, demanding that society and even the state believe in its absolute exceptionality, in its exclusive right to express ultimate truth." Hence, there are increasingly successful attempts of the Moscow Patriarchate to illegally interfere in the life of the state and society.

According to the Constitution, Russia is a secular state that recognizes religious and ideological diversity and freedom of beliefs. Nevertheless, the state assists the Moscow Patriarchate in imposing a new ideology on society (much like the imposition of communism in the past) — the Orthodox faith in ROC's interpretation (editions). This was primarily manifested when lobbyists for the Moscow Patriarchate pushed a discriminatory law "On Freedom of Conscience" [15] through the parliament and President Boris Yeltsin, which came into force in September 1997. This law practically granted significant privileges to the Moscow Patriarchate. **Encouraged by this law, ROC not only successfully attempts to privatize the spiritual realm of life, but also infringes on civil liberties, interferes in government activities, and infiltrates state and public structures, driving out its religious competitors from everywhere.**



РОССИЙСКАЯ ФЕДЕРАЦИЯ
ФЕДЕРАЛЬНЫЙ ЗАКОН

О СВОБОДЕ СОВЕСТИ И О РЕЛИГИОЗНЫХ ОБЪЕДИНЕНИЯХ

Принят Государственной Думой 19 сентября 1997 года
Одобрен Советом Федерации 24 сентября 1997 года

Федеральное Собрание Российской Федерации,

подтверждая право каждого на свободу совести и свободу вероисповедания, а также на равенство перед законом независимо от отношения к религии и убеждений,

основываясь на том, что Российская Федерация является светским государством,

признавая особую роль православия в истории России, в становлении и развитии ее духовности и культуры,

уважая христианство, ислам, буддизм, иудаизм и другие религии, составляющие неотъемлемую часть исторического наследия народов России,

считая важным содействовать достижению взаимного понимания, терпимости и уважения в вопросах свободы совести и свободы вероисповедания,

принимает настоящий Федеральный закон.

ГЛАВА I. ОБЩИЕ ПОЛОЖЕНИЯ

Статья 1. Предмет регулирования настоящего Федерального закона

Настоящий Федеральный закон регулирует правоотношения в области прав человека и гражданина на свободу совести и свободу вероисповедания, а также правовое положение религиозных объединений.

FEDERAL LAW
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
of September 26, 1997 No. 125-FZ

ABOUT LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE AND ABOUT RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS

Adopted by the State Duma on September 10, 1997

Approved by the Federation Council on September 24, 1997

Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation,

confirming the right of everyone to liberty of conscience and religious liberty, and also to equality before the law irrespective of the relation to religion and beliefs,

that the Russian Federation is the secular state

recognizing special role of Orthodoxy in the history of Russia, in formation and development of her spirituality and culture,

respecting Christianity, Islam, the Buddhism, Judaism and other religious constituting integral part of historical heritage of the people of Russia

considering important to assist achievement of mutual understanding, tolerance and respect in questions of liberty of conscience and religious liberty,

adopts this Federal Law.

CHAPTER I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1. Subject of regulation of this Federal Law

This Federal Law regulates legal relationship in the field of rights of man and citizen on liberty of conscience and religious liberty, and also legal status of religious associations, including feature of their civil provision.

EXPOSING ANTI CULT TERRORISM

Screenshot from duma.consultant.ru website [27]

Based on the new law, not only the so-called “exotic” sects are being discriminated against, but relying on a false canonical postulate, **the Moscow Patriarchate demands a special role in “nurturing” the living space and compels civil authorities to discriminate against all other denominations of Catholics and Protestants everywhere.**

At the same time, vast tracts of land and various real estate, including non-religious assets that never belonged to the Church, are transferred to the Moscow Patriarchate free of charge. Meanwhile, for many years, the Catholic Church has been unsuccessfully seeking to return its churches in Moscow, Smolensk, Oryol, Pyatigorsk, Kislovodsk, and other cities.

Baptists, Pentecostals, and Adventists have been denied requests to sell or lease land plots and buildings.

Teaching of religious disciplines by clergymen of the Moscow Patriarchate under the guise of “religious studies” is being introduced in higher educational institutions, even in military academies. In some regions (Smolensk, Kursk, Moscow Oblasts, etc.), teaching of God’s Law has been incorporated into the curriculum of public secondary schools as part of general education.

The army is undergoing widespread clericalization. Official ceremonies are held: blessing of banners, missiles, ships, particularly soldiers and weapons deployed to the Chechen war, which grossly contradicts the current law “On the Status of Military Personnel” prohibiting religious activities in military units.

Screenshot from caliber.az website [25]

The same can be said about the penitentiary system where only Orthodox Christian churches are being built, while clergymen who do not belong to the Moscow Patriarchate structure are pushed out of prisons and labor camps whose inmates are deprived of spiritual care.

The substitution of spiritual revival of post-communist society with external Orthodox clericalization will inevitably lead to a new spiritual crisis in society, occurring against the backdrop of dubious claims that 60-70% of the country's population are Orthodox Christians. More credible statistics from the Ministry of Internal Affairs [16] reveal that during the Orthodox Christmas celebration, around 200,000 people (1.5% of Moscow population) attend Orthodox churches in the capital

city (there are about 500 such churches). Considering that many people attend churches out of mere curiosity on this holiday, the percentage of truly devout believers is likely even lower.

In its attempt to drive the country and society back into the Middle Ages, Orthodox clericalism not only suppresses freedom of conscience, but often exacerbates ethnic tensions, effectively classifying Russian Orthodox believers as full-fledged citizens, while treating non-Russians and non-believers as second-class individuals, thereby encouraging a form of spiritual and ethnic apartheid.

AS SOMEONE ONCE SAID, ROC IS ACTUALLY A SECT. HE SAID IT'S REPULSIVE — IT'S DESTRUCTIVE, COMPULSIVE; THEN ADDED INSIDIOUSLY: IT'S TOTALITARIAN HIDEOUSLY

The Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), chaired by Patriarch Kirill (Vladimir Gundyaev), 2016, Hall of Church Councils, Cathedral of Christ the Savior, Moscow

Recently, the Moscow Patriarchate has unleashed a hysterical campaign against new religious movements, rightly considering some of them serious competitors. By accusing other religious organizations of suppressing the personal freedoms of their members and depriving them of basic civil rights, the Patriarchate is employing the well-known method of "stop thief." Having established an enslaving charter for its parishes at the state level, completely expropriating the property of church communities, stubbornly refusing to implement the church court system mandated by canon law, and having turned its ministers into serfs, the "red church" has itself transformed into a typical totalitarian sect.

The foundations of Orthodox Christian conciliarity have been destroyed to the ground. Since the establishment of ROC in 1943, the principle of electing bishops has been rejected. Furthermore, this principle, introduced by the Local Council in 1917-1918, has been abolished. Even the formally existing elections of parish wardens during Soviet times have been eliminated. As a result of recent innovations, the chairpersons of church assemblies are no longer elected by parishioners, but can be appointed by ruling archbishops. There are already examples of that. The Patriarch appointed archpriest Oleg Klemyshev both the rector and the warden of the devastated community of Father Georgy Kochetkov. Complaints are coming from many dioceses about diocesan administrations

mandating parishes to adopt new statutes that allow for the direct appointment of wardens “from above.”

Speaking at a Moscow diocesan assembly in late December 1997, Alexy II provided a canonical basis for patriarchal totalitarianism. Distorting the meaning of the 39th Apostolic Rule that states: “**Let not the presbyters or deacons do anything without the sanction of the bishop**,” the Patriarch expands the norm concerning liturgical activities to unencompassable proportions, particularly **threatening any cleric who dares to “appeal to state authorities without the consent of higher church authority.”** It is not surprising that the Patriarch considers such an interpretation of the 39th rule to be a “fundamental church law.” This provision was later confirmed by the decision of the next Archbishop Council.

At the same assembly, the Patriarch threatened “church disciplinary responsibility” even for retired and already suspended clergy for any statements that do not align with his point of view. Furthermore, on December 29, 1998, the Holy Synod “perfected” this idea, specifically pointing out the **impermissibility for pastors to create communities around themselves where there is a critical attitude towards the higher church leadership**. It is interesting how this leadership combines the prohibition of criticism directed at it with the evangelical call: “If your brother sins against you, go, expose

him…" (Matt. 18:15-17). Among the clergy, KGB agents wearing panagias want to see thoughtless performers of rituals, "Orthodox shamans," encouraging all sorts of superstitions and magicism preserved at the level of a rural resident of the 19th century, but most importantly, they regard the clergy as their unquestioning slaves.

In the aforementioned speech, Patriarch Alexy formulated a new theology of the "red patriarchate" and stated regarding the critical remarks of some priests on a purely civil issue — the adoption of a new law on freedom of conscience: "Persons with differing opinions are at least obliged to refrain from publicly announcing them. Otherwise, they are subject to church disciplinary responsibility… Canons, under the threat of severe penalties, prohibit clergy from appealing to state authorities independently, without the consent of higher church authority." Thus, for criticizing the new law on freedom of conscience, an inspector of St. Petersburg Spiritual Academy, Archimandrite Veniamin Novik, was thrown out of service. This is no longer feudalism; it is slavery! How is this not a totalitarian sect?

The Governance Statute of ROC, its civil statute, and the model statute for ROC parishes, with their demands for strict hierarchical subordination of the Synod's omnipotence over the episcopate, establish a church order that fundamentally

contradicts Orthodox Christian canonical law, particularly resolutions of the ROC Local Council of 1917-18; a church structure that corresponds not to the "Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church," but to a militarized one, built on the basis of unquestioning obedience from junior commanders to senior ones throughout the vertical of executive power. Even the style of ROC's current statutes eloquently testifies to that. For instance, the first paragraph of the standard Charter for ROC parishes declares: "The parish is a religious association, which is the primary structural unit of the Russian Orthodox Church," while paragraph 4 of the ROC Civil Charter states: "The ROC is a single centralized religious association, including hierarchically subordinate structural units…" and so on. Haven't these principles of barrack-like organization been borrowed from the statute of the state security service? The current ROC Statute event prohibits convening councils of active members ("councils of ten") in parishes without the permission of a ruling archbishop.

Strengthening of the Moscow Patriarchate's totalitarian characteristics has also been facilitated by the expropriation from communities and the transfer of all movable and immovable property (buildings, religious items, financial assets, and land plots) into the centralized ownership of the higher church leadership (ROC Civil Statute, 111, 15), which results in a tremendous concentration of power in the hands

of the Patriarch and the Synod. This very anti-canonical privatization by the church high-ranking officials and the removal of property from the jurisdiction of parishes actually creates a material foundation for totalitarianism and the omnipotence of the Patriarchate's leadership over all aspects of church life.

A decisive step towards transforming the Moscow Patriarchate into a totalitarian sect was the usurpatory decision of the Archbishop Council held in 2000, which transferred the fullness of power in ROC from the Local Council to the Archbishop Council and arbitrarily abolished mandatory timelines for convening Local Councils that had been the "sanctum sanctorum" of the canonical structure of the Russian Orthodox Church (according to the definition of the last ROC Local Council of 1990, the Local Council was to be convened at least once every five years).

While absurdly accusing "totalitarian sects" of attempting to seize power, the Patriarchate itself seeks to occupy a dominant position in the state and is once again filling its habitual niche in state security. If under the communist regime, CPSU's status was unattainable for the Church, and in the realm of public service it had to be content with intelligence activities, today it seeks a monopoly over society's entire spiritual life and

imposes its leading role on the government in ensuring national security in the spiritual field.

RELIGIOUS MONSTER WITH A SHARP TONGUE, EAGER TO STRIKE NATO

In Christianity, murder has always been considered a sin, although killing an enemy in a fair war or killing a villain who intended to commit a crime was justified during confession. Some priests, however, claimed that "murder may also be a virtue" (published in "Sturm" ["Assault"] magazine, Issues 11–12, 1996). During the Soviet times, under pressure from the authorities, church hierarchs condemned American cruise missiles. However, back then nobody could think of declaring Soviet nuclear missiles "blessed" and "Orthodox," even in the Council for Religious Affairs or the propaganda department of the CPSU Central Committee. Yet now, Patriarch of Moscow Alexy II, after visiting the Strategic Missile Forces Command Center, appointed St. Barbara the heavenly patroness of those missiles, apparently so that the missile, God forbid, would not fly past Washington or Paris. The World Russian People's Council (WRPC), which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, went even further beyond communist propaganda. WRPC is one of the most fundamentalist Orthodox organizations, which is led by Patriarch Alexy of Moscow and

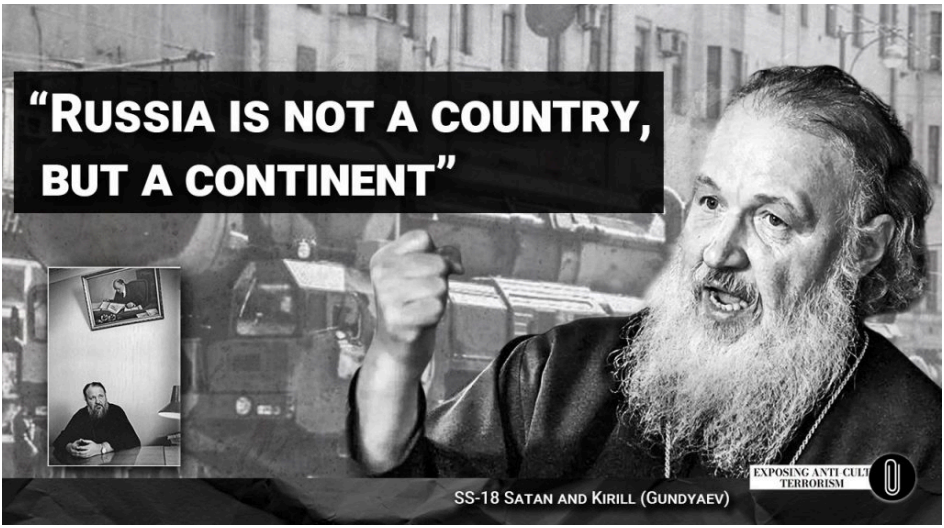
All Rus' and has inherited many features of the pre-revolutionary "Union of the Russian People" [17].

Screenshot from the website vrns.ru [18]

This "Russian Council" has already declared its claims to state power and its non-recognition of existing borders in the world. At a semi-closed meeting convened by Metropolitan Kirill on November 12, 1996 with the Patriarch's blessing, which was reported in some detail only by the newspaper "Segodnya" ["Today"] on November 13, 1996, the council members called upon and blessed the famous missiles for their assistance. The exalted Black Hundreds seem to have become like the Afghan Taliban, threatening the entire world with "Orthodox Sharia."

For 30 years, ordinary westerners lived in fear that at the whim of some unpredictable or drunken CPSU General Secretary, Soviet nuclear missiles would bring about a communist apocalypse. Yet, communism collapsed, the USSR disintegrated, and people breathed a sigh of relief… but in vain!

In place of the CPSU Central Committee secretaries for ideology, a new "rider on a wan horse" has emerged, draped in a metropolitan's cloak, wielding not the word of God, but an SS-18 missile. Metropolitan Kirill Gundyaev [19] has declared that he regards NATO enlargement as a biblical sign of the Antichrist's advent. ROC's new ideologist has abrogated God's will and provided a new geopolitical understanding of the ideals of the Third Rome and Holy Rus': "Russia isn't a country, but a continent."



Metropolitan Kirill Gundyaev

A representative of the Synodal Department for Cooperation with Armed Forces, Archpriest Konstantin Tatarintsev, deepened the thoughts of his senior colleague by condemning pacifism and declaring that nuclear weapons bear the mark of

original sin only when they are created without Orthodox prayer. Christ's shepherd called for a portion of donations from believers to be allocated to the needs of the nuclear missile complex. Nuclear weapons of the United States, produced without Orthodox prayer, were labeled "satanic."

The height of blasphemy was the idea that since Soviet missiles were made in Arzamas-16, the revered Seraphim of Sarov who lived there a century earlier is the heavenly patron of weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, in a number of speeches, missiles intended for destruction of millions of peaceful people were referred to as "our guardian angels." This is a new theological revelation: previously, Orthodox Christianity held that there were nine ranks of angels, but now the Moscow Patriarchate has discovered a tenth.

Recently, much has been said about how the Moscow Patriarchate, established in 1943 by Stalin and Beria, brings moral decay to Russian society and poses a threat to national security. However, it is now becoming clear: this religious monster is dangerous for the entire global community and for peace worldwide. It can only exist under the totalitarian dictatorship that spawned it, as one of the tools for suppressing freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and as a means of propagating global tyranny under the banner of the Third Rome. Those who disagree with this revived feudal

inquisition are called to face “fire and brimstone” from heaven — “Orthodox nuclear weapons.”

As long as the Russian state does not cease its interference in the internal affairs of Orthodox Christianity by providing all material resources exclusively to the Stalinist Patriarchate while discriminating against the true Orthodox believers, and does not grant Orthodox believers the internationally guaranteed right to “assemble according to their own hierarchical and institutional structure; to choose, appoint, and replace their personnel according to their relevant requirements and standards,” the pseudo-church entity ROC will keep destabilizing the situation in Russia and around the world.

BLUNDERS IN PROTOCOLS OF MOSCOW WISE MEN

In June 1993, in the Danilovsky Monastery, a little-noticed First World Russian People’s Council was held under the leadership of ROC top officials — the Patriarch and Metropolitan Kirill whose worldview over the past years, as one expert expressed it, began to turn into a “combustible mixture” of aggressive nationalism and militant clericalism.

From February 1 to 3, 1995, the Second World Russian People’s Council convened. Alongside prominent figures of the Russian

Orthodox Church — Patriarch Alexy and Metropolitan Kirill, the Council was led by well-known patriotic nationalists, including V. Ganichev, I. Kolchenko, N. Narochitskaya, N. Burlyaev, A. Rutskoy, A. Sterligov, I. Konstantinov, N. Ryzhkov, V. Rasputin, V. Belov, E. Volodin, and other anti-democrats with imperialist and nationalist views.

Final documents of the Council contained a sharp criticism of the ethnic policy pursued in the country and declared the Moscow Patriarchate's willingness to lead all Russian nationalist movements and organizations, especially those that claim to hold a Zemsky Sobor [government council] in the near future: *"Only the All-Russian Zemsky Sobor, headed by the Orthodox Church, can summon God's chosen one to reign, in the Russian spirit, by joint consent."* The status of the "God's chosen one" can be inferred from the following postulate adopted at the "Council": *"Monarchy is the optimal, history-proven, centuries-old form of state power in Russia."* Incidentally, the preference for monarchy as a higher form of state structure is also mentioned in "The Basis of the Social Concept" adopted by the ROC Archbishop Council in 2000.

The Third "World Council" took another step towards strengthening ethnic and religious chauvinism. "The oppressed state of ethnic Russians in a number of countries, various nationalist forces, and anti-Russian sentiments — all of this

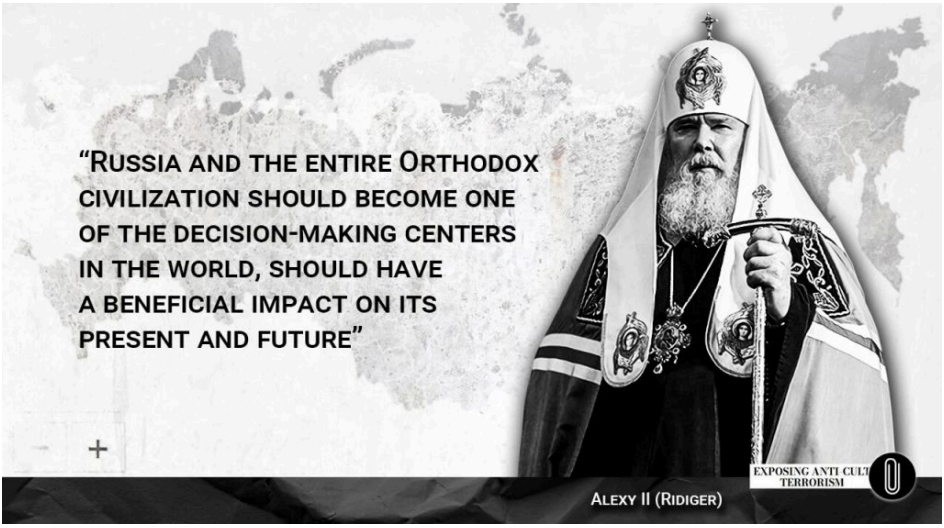
requires an appropriate response from the Russian state." **"The Russian people have the right to reunification." Didn't similar cries and lamentations about a divided people underlie the recreation of the Third Reich** and led to the annexation of Austria, Alsace, the Sudetenland, Gdansk, and ultimately to World War II?

There are some more "gems" of creativity announced by the third "Council" to the public: "The Council proposes to hold in the near future a meeting with representatives of legislative and executive authorities, subjects of the Federation, and political forces to develop an agreement on the main principles for overcoming the crisis in the Fatherland. The Council is ready to take the initiative in organizing and conducting such a forum" — that is, a Zemsky Sobor to elect its own "Godunov." One might ask, where is the functioning Constitution of a democratic secular state? Here it is — the triumph of religious nationalism!

The Sixth World Council was honored by the presence and speech of President Vladimir Putin. In his address, the President attempted to talk sense into the Council participants, calling for religious tolerance in the new conditions! *"We need societal unity in rejecting xenophobia and violence, everything that feeds the ideology of terrorism... We must oppose it with spirituality and tolerance."*

However, in Alexy II's speech, the path to social unity was proposed as follows: sort of, they are not against it, but only under their wise leadership. "Russia and all of Orthodox civilization must become one of the centers *(he surely lies — he wants it to be the only one — note by Gleb Yakunin)* for decision-making in the world, and must positively influence its present and future..." Having fallen into the delusion of greatness, Alexy II seemed to overlook that the Moscow Patriarchate had already made an extraordinary and unparalleled statement in 1949 on behalf of both Russia and the Church: an "Honorary Address to the God-chosen Leader of All Ages and Nations, the Great Stalin" in celebration of his seventieth birthday. Back then, not a single ruling ROC archbishop had the guts to refuse to put his signature under this monstrous document. From one "Council" to another, the immeasurable claims of the Moscow Patriarchate to power are only growing. It is no longer satisfied with the classical idea of "Moscow – the Third Rome," according to which the Orthodox "Basileusk" was to embrace the Church as an elder brother (a boiling mirage that almost became a reality, but Stalin died too soon!). Now it demands a Western caesaropapist variant, despite the fact that even in the Middle Ages the Catholic Church failed to implement it. Nonetheless, the Patriarchate secretly dreams that perhaps it will achieve that in the Third Rome, for the Fourth will not come to be. It is no coincidence that the Moscow Patriarchate has lately grown fond of

Patriarch Nikon: it was he who tried to make tsar Alexei “Tishaishii” (“the quietest one”) his vassal to govern the state on the Church’s behalf and revive caesaropapism in Russia according to Byzantine rite.


“RUSSIA AND THE ENTIRE ORTHODOX CIVILIZATION SHOULD BECOME ONE OF THE DECISION-MAKING CENTERS IN THE WORLD, SHOULD HAVE A BENEFICIAL IMPACT ON ITS PRESENT AND FUTURE”
EXPOSING ANTI CULT TERRORISM
ALEXY II (RIDIGER)

The new President is decent in all aspects: he is growing in religiosity as his spiritual advisor testifies; he’s an exemplary monastic pilgrim who receives spiritual guidance in conversations with monks, and he himself resembles a good novice… Maybe, he will soon heed “God’s Voice” and hear the truth about the structure of Holy Rus’ through the Mother Church, and then the long-awaited miracle of the universal triumph of Russian Orthodoxy will manifest. However, His Holiness seems to have forgotten how Alexander Pushkin’s “Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish” ended. It is unlikely that the “golden fish” will want to serve again and run errands for

the Orthodox “mistress of the sea.” As in the case of His Holiness Nikon, only a broken washtub awaits the current hierarchs.

Let’s again recall the honorary address from ROC clergy and laity to the “Leader of the USSR Peoples, Generalissimo Joseph Stalin,” on the occasion of his seventieth birthday on December 21, 1949, signed by all the ROC bishops, many of whom endured long hardships of Stalin’s Gulag [20]. Among the countless gifts and congratulations, this document was perhaps the most valuable offering — a verbal gift to the great jubilarian. The honorary address was the apotheosis in the service of the “servants of cult” to the cult of Stalin’s personality whom they called “the Fatherly caring guardian of all aspects of our human existence.” A Christian can only refer to the Heavenly Father this way.

A PROBLEM AROSE WITH THE PR CAMPAIGN — A MYSTERY THAT CANNOT BE EXPLAINED

The entire society is witnessing the strengthening of the “vertical of power” under the control of President Vladimir Putin. Naturally, the president’s overall worldview will have significant influence on the shaping of his political views. This explains the justified attention (not mere curiosity) drawn to the unexpected contradictory reports about Putin’s religiosity.

Back in September 2000, during a live broadcast on CNN, in response to a question from Larry King, the well-known talk show host, "Do you believe in higher power?" Putin replied, "I believe in humans. I believe in their good intentions. I believe that we are all here to do good." This response is worthy of a convinced humanist and nothing more. However, gradually, the media began to show images of Putin as a pilgrim visiting churches and monasteries, his conversations with monks, and even the moment when Putin visited St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in New York (during his last visit to the USA), where a memorial service was held for the victims of terrorism.

An interesting revelation came during an interview with Maxim Meyer, a senior official in the Presidential Administration, conducted by Geraldine Fagan on August 30, 2001, for the UK-based Keston News Service. Meyer expressed disapproval of Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov) and accused him of self-promotion. When asked whether Tikhon was indeed the President's spiritual advisor, Meyer replied, "*This is completely untrue, neither regarding Putin himself nor even his wife*." Meyer also commented on the ROC, saying, "*Many trust them. We know what is really happening within the church, but people are unaware… The church is only engaged in intrigues, financial matters, and relations with the state, while its foundation is crumbling and eroding*." Was it actually for these

revelations that Meyer was immediately dismissed from the Presidential Administration?

On December 8, 2001, following Putin's visit to Greece, the newspaper "Izvestia" republished an interview with Tikhon Shevkunov [21] from an Athens newspaper "Chora." In the interview, Tikhon proudly testified to the exemplary religiosity of Putin and his entire family. Moreover, in the preface to the publication, "Izvestia" presented Shevkunov as none other than the spiritual advisor to the Russian President.

Vladimir Putin and Tikhon (Shevkunov). Photo from graniru.org [26]

If President Putin has indeed become an Orthodox believer, this is a development that can only be welcomed, as is the fact that the country's leadership has turned to faith and has a spiritual advisor. Although such matters belong to one's personal sphere, the announcement that the President's spiritual advisor is a politicized figure with an active anti-democratic stance causes reasonable concern for many. Archimandrite Tikhon was involved in the expulsion of the popular Father Georgy Kochetkov and his numerous congregation from their parish, after which he took over Kochetkov's church on Lubyanka. Tikhon is one of the spiritual leaders of the nationalist and fundamentalist TV program "Russian House."

Here are some of Archimandrite Tikhon's statements that reflect his worldview: In 1998, Tikhon published an article titled "Schengen Area," a manifesto for fundamentalists combating the "number of the beast" (666). It appeared in "Russian House" and the extremist publication "Russian Order" by the Barkashov-led Russian National Unity. He wrote: "I was struck by the overwhelming number of occurrences of the number 666 in New York... Three gigantic sixes glowed on a skyscraper, on taxi roofs, and even the telephone set was adorned with those same digits..." Here is also what the archimandrite says about censorship: "Censorship is a normal tool in a normal society, which should cut off the extreme.

Personally, I am, of course, in favor of it both in religious and secular spheres."

The nature of "Russian House" is evident from its publications, such as Issue 12 from 2001. In an article on a topical subject (December 12 is the day of the Constitution of Russia), titled "The Deceitfulness of the Liberal Constitution," some A.N. Saveliev "glorifies" the main law of the country as follows: "The Constitution of the Russian Federation is based on pan-Russian principles of equality and self-determination of peoples. This means that Russian people who created Russia and comprise over 85% of its population are placed on the same level as small ethnic groups."

"The entire first chapter of the Constitution of Russia, 'The Fundamentals of the Constitutional System,' is a complete lie. Not a single clause has ever been fulfilled."

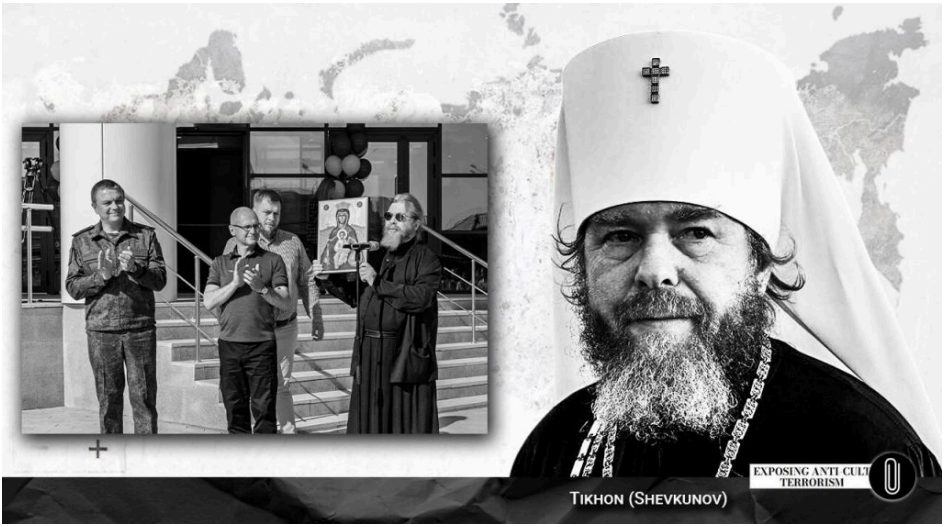
"The declared impossibility of a state religion means total immorality in governance is both predetermined and legislatively affirmed."

"The entire second chapter of the Constitution of Russia 'Rights and Freedoms of Man And Citizen,' is a complete lie."

"The freedom of conscience declared in the Constitution becomes freedom *from* conscience."

“It is simply impossible to list all the abominations of Yeltsin’s Constitution.” Such a scathing remark concludes this “panegyric” against the current Constitution.

The influence of a spiritual advisor on the worldview of his protégé can be profound. While President Putin faces no risk of being recruited by intelligence agencies (as happened to the unfortunate Colonel Trofimoff), what guarantees exist that the guarantor of the Constitution will not succumb to anti-constitutional ideas promoted by the “Russian House” and its ideologue, Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov?



CONCLUSION — (AN APPEAL FOR HEALING)

Let not the reader’s heart be troubled by the dose of irony in these notes on such an elevated subject. The veil of irony

allows me to endure the lingering pain over the heavy plight of Russian Orthodoxy. For thirty years now, I have been openly defending my Church against its internal and external enemies. Without favoritism, I strive to speak of its afflictions, believing that wounds driven inward lead only to destruction. Both the faithful Orthodox Christians who constitute the Church in its fullness and Russian society as a whole need to know the full truth about the Moscow Patriarchate, which has unlawfully declared itself the successor of millennia-old Russian Orthodox Christianity.

In 1965, after my first public appeal (together with Father Nikolai Eschliman) in an open letter about the state of the Church in the USSR, the state security apparatus, acting through Patriarch Alexy I, banned me from serving as a priest for 21 years. This action, ironically, was more humane than what Patriarch Alexy II and his Synod did years later: acting of their own initiative, they defrocked me and, four years later in 1993, excommunicated me entirely from the Church. These decisions, which blatantly violate the canons of universal and Russian Orthodoxy, I have not recognized. I remain a priest of the Orthodox renewal of the Church and await a just decision from the highest ecclesiastical authority — the Local Council — the only body empowered to resolve my case.

Without the revival of Orthodoxy, there can be no revival of Russia. Yet, true revival is not found in statistical reports of churches and monasteries returned by the state, nor in the number of consecrated offices, nor in the ostentatious presence of state privileged class holding candles during services. True revival lies in the spiritual awakening of society, the discovery of higher moral compass points, which is inconceivable without repentance and renunciation of past crimes.

The Russian Orthodox Church should have set an example of such a commitment to truth as it has much to repent for. Yet, the Moscow Patriarchate stubbornly refuses to acknowledge the truth about itself, distorting its history for mercenary purposes and inventing its own mythology to justify its alleged lineage from Saint Vladimir, Saint Sergius, and Patriarch Tikhon.

After the partial publication of KGB archival materials by the commission of the Supreme Soviet of Russia, regarding the agent activities of the ROC's senior clergy, the Patriarchate, under the pressure of disclosure, was forced to establish its own commission in 1992 to investigate the facts of cooperation between Church representatives and intelligence agencies. This commission was headed by Bishop Alexander of Kostroma. However, over the years, the commission has not

presented any evidence of its work; the results of the investigations were met with silence at the Bishops' Councils of 1994 and 2000. Undoubtedly, the true purpose of the existence of the Patriarchal Commission (presently, as it has not been formally dissolved) is not to disclose to the Church the truth about the shameful deeds of the ROC leadership before the "socialist Motherland," but rather to conceal the truth.

The leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate neither confirm nor deny their long-standing collaboration with the KGB, believing that no one can force them to speak. In this way, the Patriarch and Synod repeatedly demonstrate their criminal disregard and indifference towards their flock, showing detachment from the people. Among the Church hierarchs, only the Archbishop Chrysostom of Lithuania has found the courage to openly acknowledge his past as an agent under the alias "Restorer."

In 1992, the parliamentary commission of the State Committee on the State of Emergency (SCSE) investigating the causes and circumstances issued a special ruling (see Appendix) proposing to prohibit the use of clergy as secret employees of secret services. At my suggestion, the Supreme Soviet of Russia enacted legislative amendments — still in force — that classify clergy as individuals (along with prosecutors, judges, and

deputies) whose recruitment by intelligence agencies is forbidden. **However, the proposal made by the parliamentary commission for the Church itself to adopt internal rules (canons) forbidding clergy from collaborating as informants was rejected by the Patriarchate.**

After the collapse of the USSR, the Patriarchate suffered a defeat in the "near abroad." Parishes in Ukraine, Estonia, and Moldova largely severed ties with the "Moscow throne" due to the Patriarchate's unwillingness to pursue a path of purification and renewal. Unsurprisingly, in the minds of these churches, the ROC is seen as a double of the communist-Soviet-style totalitarianism. The Patriarchate lacks significant spiritual influence on society either there or in Russia itself.

Being a product of the totalitarian regime, the Moscow Patriarchate, having rejected conciliarity, is itself an organization of a totalitarian nature.

Clearly, it finds no place in a free democratic society. This explains its inclination towards political entities of a communist and nationalist-patriotic nature, which share a similarly totalitarian organizational structure.

Throughout the centuries of history, Christian Churches that endured profound crises were able to emerge resilient only

when the faithful themselves played an active role in ecclesiastical renewal. The tragic fate of the Russian Orthodox Church cannot be an exception to this historical pattern.

Restoring the Orthodox Church in Russia to its rightful form is impossible without profound internal reforms and a return to the democratic principles of the Local Council of 1917-1918. The omnipotence of the Patriarchate and the Holy Synod must be abolished, and the canonical election of clergy at all hierarchical levels must be revived. This cannot be achieved without lustration of the Patriarchate's senior leadership: individuals who have been promoted to high church positions at the behest of secret agencies must answer to the faithful for their collaboration with the godless regime, or at least offer public repentance for their Judas-like past. Only by shedding the legacy of communism can the Church become a meaningful social force, open its mouth to preach, and serve the world as an example through its good deeds. Otherwise, the Russian Orthodox Church will finally devolve into a relic ethnographic preserve, a ritual-service enterprise catering to an ignorant and unchurched populace.

Appendix

Private Ruling of the Commission of the Presidium of the Russian Federation

Supreme Council on Investigating the Causes and Circumstances of the August Coup [22]

To the leaders and hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church:

The Commission draws the attention of the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church to the unconstitutional use by the Central Committee of the CPSU and the KGB of the USSR of several church bodies for their own purposes through the recruitment and infiltration of KGB agents. For example, under the auspices of the Department of External Church Relations, agents with codenames such as “Svyatoslav,” “Adamant,” “Mikhailov,” “Topaz,” “Nesterovich,” “Kuznetsov,” “Ognev,” and “Esaulenko,” among others, were sent abroad to carry out assignments for KGB leadership. The nature of the assignments they performed indicates the inseparability of the said Department from the state and its transformation into a covert center for KGB agents among the faithful.

Through its agents, the KGB maintained control over international religious organizations in which the Russian Orthodox Church also participated, including the World Council of Churches, the Christian Peace Conference, and the Conference of European Churches. The Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee and the Chairman of the USSR KGB, Yuri

Andropov [23], reported to the CPSU Central Committee that the KGB controlled the ROC's relations with the Vatican.

Such deep infiltration of religious organizations by intelligence agents presents a serious threat to society and the state: government bodies intended to ensure constitutional rights exert influence on multimillion-member religious organizations and, through them, on the situation domestically and abroad. As demonstrated by the coup of August 19-21, 1991, the possibility of using religion for unconstitutional purposes was real.

Particularly troubling is the visit of Metropolitan Pitirim (Nechaev) to B.K. Pugo, declared a state criminal and outlawed by the President of Russia, on August 21, 1991. In diplomatic terms, this is "de facto" recognition. The fertile ground for such a visit was that the Moscow Patriarchate's Publishing Department was controlled by KGB agents. Reports from the 5th Directorate of the USSR KGB regarding the Publishing Department frequently mention agents "Abbot" (from among the hierarchs) and "Grigoryev," who often traveled abroad and evidently held (or hold) high positions in this institution.

The undeniable guilt for the current situation lies with the CPSU and its subordinate state bodies. However, it is also clear that religious organizations themselves are likely unaware of

the full truth about their employees. A lustration of church agents could be a harsh, even cruel act toward the Church, which has already suffered greatly. The Commission believes it would be better for believers themselves to find a way to purify the Church of imposed, unconstitutional elements.

Unfortunately, the Church leadership has not yet expressed an official stance on the problem of depoliticization. The referent of Patriarch Alexy II, Deacon Andrey Kuraev, described publications about the Commission's materials as persecution of the Church and even a ""triumph" of the KGB itself ("Moskovskiye Novosti," Issue 10, 1992). However, Archbishop Chrysostom of Vilnius contradicted Deacon Kuraev by revealing his own 18 years of collaboration with the KGB ("Rossiyskaya Gazeta," Issue 52/388, 1992, p. 7).

In the absence of an official stance from the Church leadership, the Commission recommends introducing canonical and civil prohibitions against the secret collaboration of Church officials with state agencies. It also advises reviewing the past activities of Church administrative and international departments to ensure compliance with the constitutional principle of the separation of Church and state.

To eliminate the risk of the Church being used for unconstitutional purposes, the Commission has proposed

amendments to current legislation prohibiting the involvement of clergy in law enforcement intelligence operations. However, practical enforcement of this provision requires prohibition from both sides — the state and the Church itself.

The Commission expresses hope that the Russian Orthodox Church will be able to overcome the heavy legacy of the past.

92. *Chairman of the Commission,*

People's Deputy P. Ponomarev

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